

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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National Diabetes Awareness Month

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month, which is the perfect opportunity to learn facts about the disease and reduce your risk factors by staying active, especially in the winter.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which your body either can't produce insulin or can't properly use the insulin it produces. Insulin is a hormone produced by your pancreas. Its role is to regulate the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood. Blood sugar must be carefully regulated to ensure the body functions properly. Too much blood sugar can cause damage to organs, blood vessels, and nerves. Your body also needs insulin in order to use sugar for energy.

According to diabetes.ca, 11 million Canadians are living with diabetes or prediabetes.

What is the difference between Type 1 Diabetes vs. Type 2 Diabetes and Prediabetes?

Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease and is also known as insulin-dependent diabetes. People with Type 1 Diabetes aren't able to produce their own insulin (and can't regulate their blood sugar) because their body is attacking the pancreas. Roughly 10 per cent of people living with diabetes have Type 1, insulin-dependent diabetes.

Type 1 Diabetes generally develops in childhood or adolescence but can also develop in adulthood. People with Type 1 need to inject insulin or use an insulin pump to ensure their bodies have the right amount of insulin.

People with Type 2 Diabetes can't properly use the insulin made by their bodies, or their bodies aren't able to produce enough insulin. Roughly 90 per cent of people living with diabetes have Type 2 Diabetes.

Type 2 Diabetes is most commonly developed in adulthood, although it can also occur in childhood. Type 2 Diabetes can sometimes be managed with healthy eating and regular exercise alone but may also require medications or insulin therapy.

Prediabetes is a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but are not yet high enough to be diagnosed as Type 2 Diabetes. Although not everyone with Prediabetes will develop Type 2 Diabetes, many people will.

If you think you or someone you know may have Type 2 Diabetes or Prediabetes, please speak to a doctor or health-care provider.

Why is staying active important in order to reduce health risks associated with Type 2 Diabetes and Prediabetes?

Staying active is crucial in the prevention of health risks associated with Type 2 Diabetes and Prediabetes. Regular physical activity helps improve insulin sensitivity, allowing the body to more effectively regulate blood sugar levels. It also aids in weight management by burning calories and reducing excess body fat, a major risk factor for diabetes. Exercise contributes to better cardiovascular health, lowering the risk of heart disease which is a common complication of diabetes.

By incorporating physical activity into one's daily routine, individuals can significantly reduce their chances of developing these serious health conditions and lead a healthier, more active life.

Tips to stay active this winter and reduce health risks associated with Type 2 Diabetes and Prediabetes

Staying physically active in the wintertime can be challenging, especially in Alberta.

Here are some ways to incorporate physical activity into your life to reduce health risks associated with Type 2 Diabetes and Prediabetes:

- Try a classic winter activity like skating, skiing, snowshoeing, cross country skiing or even sledding. These types of high-intensity activities help keep you warm when it is freezing outside.
- Mall walking is a warmer option for wintertime exercise. You can walk at your own pace and increase the frequency, intensity, and duration to improve your fitness level. Your local mall may even have an organized walking club.
- Try a yoga class.
- Join an indoor sports club like badminton, squash, or basketball.
- Climb stairs, either at home or in your workplace. Spend as little as 10 minutes at a time climbing up and down the stairs for an intense and efficient workout.

- Go for a walk at lunchtime, especially on sunny days so you can absorb some vitamin D.
- Shovel snow.
- Active housework like vacuuming, sweeping, or mopping will get you moving.
- Join a bowling league or start your own.
- Go for a swim at your local indoor pool.
- Find an accountability buddy. It can be hard to stay motivated to exercise in winter. Find a friend to exercise with, it can help keep you both motivated to stay active.
- Stay hydrated. Even though it's colder out and you might not feel as thirsty as you would in warmer weather, it's just as important to stay hydrated. Drink water before, during and after exercise.